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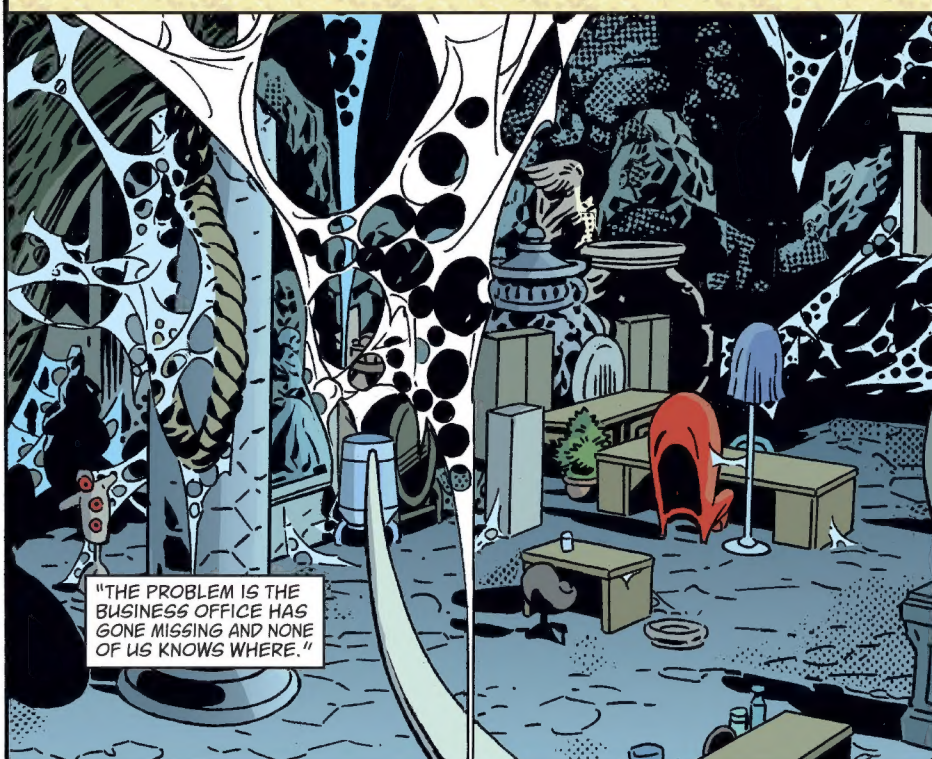
1 OF 5

WITCHES

Oct 09

suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.com

THE STORY SO FAR...The battle to save Fables (and possibly all of reality) from Kevin Thorn, the literal embodiment of Story Telling, is over. Thorn and all of the other Literals have been banished to a new unwritten universe, leaving the denizens of this one to fend for themselves from now on. But the Dark Man still lurks in the ruins of old Fabletown, and his threat isn't likely to be so easily banished from the face of the earth.



BUFKIN

CHAPTER ONE OF WITCHES

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THE FARM.



EXCEPT THAT YOU DO. YOU **PLACED** IT, ARDELIA. YOU MUST KNOW WHERE IT IS.

OR ARE YOU BULAH TODAY? OR BIRDIE? OR CHERISH?

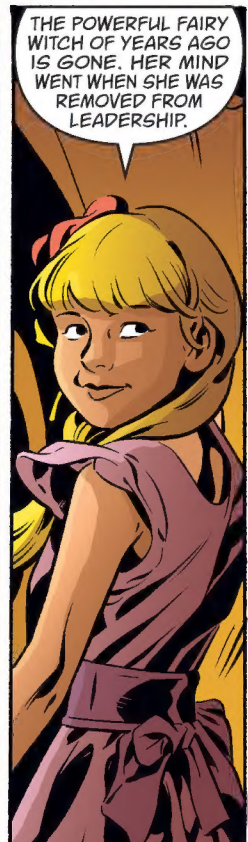


CAN YOU TRY REALLY **HARD** TO RECALL WHERE YOU PUT THE BUSINESS OFFICE OH SO LONG AGO?

I THINK THE PUDDING IS READY FOR THE BREAD NOW.

FORGET IT, FRAU TOTENKINDER. SHE'S **NEVER** GOING TO REMEMBER HOW SHE CONSTRUCTED THE BUSINESS OFFICE SPELLS OR WHERE IT ACTUALLY IS.

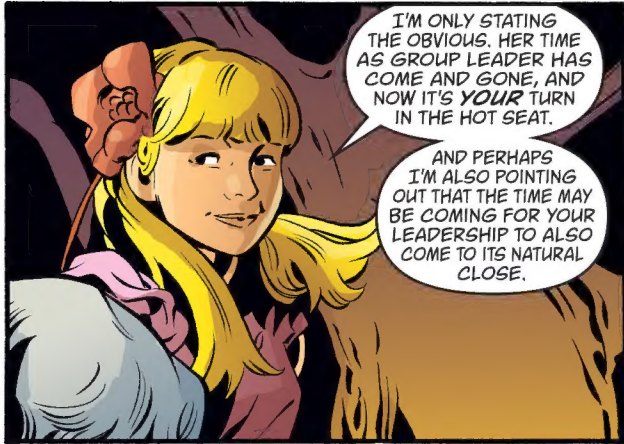
THE POWERFUL FAIRY WITCH OF YEARS AGO IS GONE. HER MIND WENT WHEN SHE WAS REMOVED FROM LEADERSHIP.





ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT I CAUSED HER MENTAL FAILINGS?

FAR BE IT FROM ME TO ASSIGN BLAME.



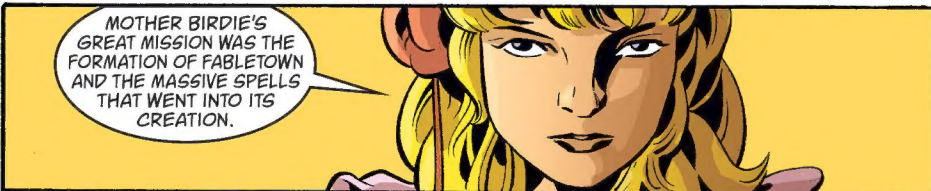
I'M ONLY STATING THE OBVIOUS. HER TIME AS GROUP LEADER HAS COME AND GONE, AND NOW IT'S *YOUR* TURN IN THE HOT SEAT.

AND PERHAPS I'M ALSO POINTING OUT THAT THE TIME MAY BE COMING FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP TO ALSO COME TO ITS NATURAL CLOSE.



OH?

THE BROWNS AND THE YELLOWS HAVE GOTTEN LITTLE AGAIN, DID YOU NOTICE?



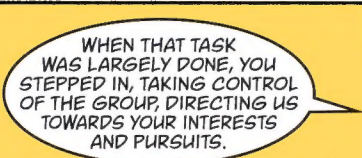
MOTHER BIRDIE'S GREAT MISSION WAS THE FORMATION OF FABLETOWN AND THE MASSIVE SPELLS THAT WENT INTO ITS CREATION.



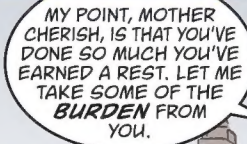
...AND THEN WE MERELY ATTACH THE **GREAT ROOM** TO THIS STRUCTURE WITH ITS OWN GATEWAY, LINKED TO A SINGLE OFFICE DOOR. SIMPLE, REALLY.

BUT WHERE'S THE GREAT ROOM ACTUALLY LOCATED?

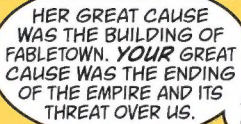
WHY DOES THAT MATTER, DEAR?



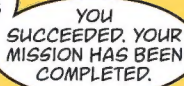
WHEN THAT TASK WAS LARGELY DONE, YOU STEPPED IN, TAKING CONTROL OF THE GROUP, DIRECTING US TOWARDS YOUR INTERESTS AND PURSUITS.



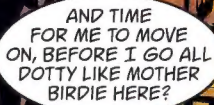
MY POINT, MOTHER CHERISH, IS THAT YOU'VE DONE SO MUCH YOU'VE EARNED A REST. LET ME TAKE SOME OF THE **BURDEN** FROM YOU.



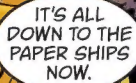
HER GREAT CAUSE WAS THE BUILDING OF FABLETOWN. **YOUR** GREAT CAUSE WAS THE ENDING OF THE EMPIRE AND ITS THREAT OVER US.



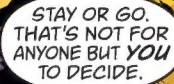
YOU SUCCEEDED. YOUR MISSION HAS BEEN COMPLETED.



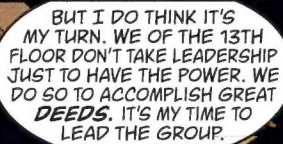
AND TIME FOR ME TO MOVE ON, BEFORE I GO ALL DOTTY LIKE MOTHER BIRDIE HERE?



IT'S ALL DOWN TO THE PAPER SHIPS NOW.



STAY OR GO. THAT'S NOT FOR ANYONE BUT **YOU** TO DECIDE.



BUT I DO THINK IT'S MY TURN. WE OF THE 13TH FLOOR DON'T TAKE LEADERSHIP JUST TO HAVE THE POWER. WE DO SO TO ACCOMPLISH GREAT **DEEDS**. IT'S MY TIME TO LEAD THE GROUP.



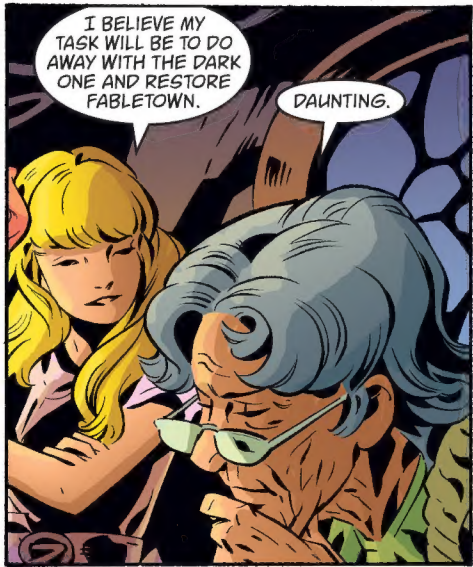
IF NOT NOW, THEN **SOON**, FRAU TOTENKINDER.



AND WHAT WILL YOUR TASK *BE*, THEN? WHAT'S YOUR MISSION IN SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY?

I SUSPECT THAT DUTY HAS ALREADY BEEN CHOSEN FOR ME.

STORM'S COMING.



I BELIEVE MY TASK WILL BE TO DO AWAY WITH THE DARK ONE AND RESTORE FABLETOWN.

DAUNTING.



BUT DON'T BE SO QUICK TO ASSUME SUCH AN UNDERTAKING IS BEYOND MY SKILLS. I MAY NOT BE DONE WITH THIS WORLD YET, YOUNG SORCERESS.



SWEET LITTLE OZMA.



THANKS.
TAKE CARE.



SO
WHAT NOW,
BIGBY?

I GUESS WE HAVE TO
WALK TO THE FARM FROM HERE.
OR CALL THEM TO SEND A CAR
OUT TO PICK US UP.



NO, WHAT DO WE TELL
THE OTHERS ABOUT
OUR MISSION?

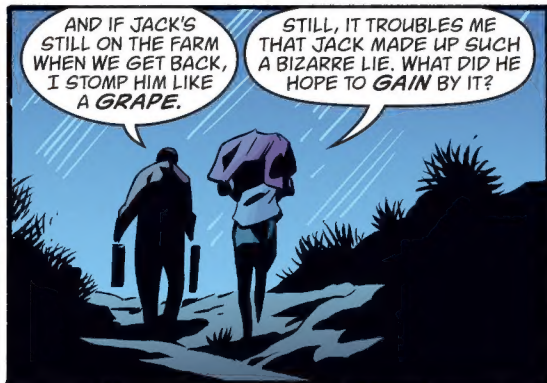


WE TELL THEM THE **TRUTH**,
OF COURSE. JACK WAS LYING
AGAIN, AS I SAID ALL ALONG.
THERE WAS NO BIG THREAT. NO
SECRET, EVIL GROUP OF ALL-
POWERFUL LIBERALS.



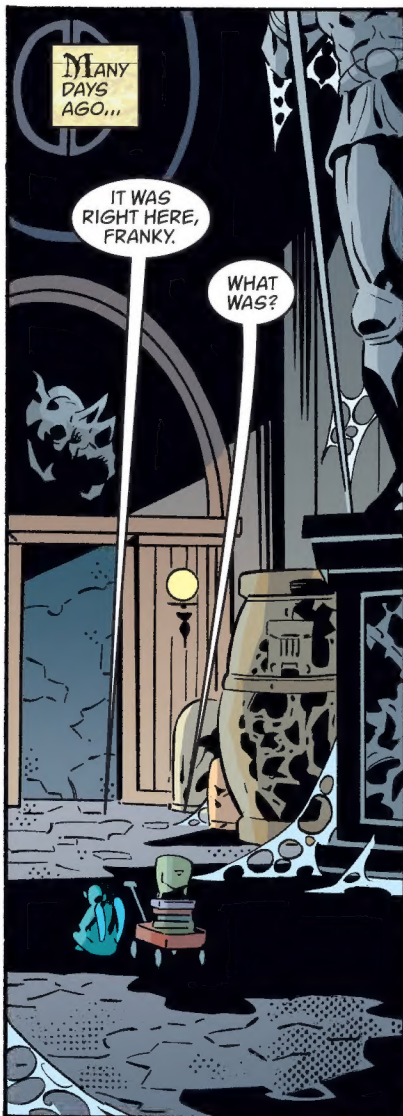
LITERALS.

RIGHT. LITERALS. THEY
DIDN'T EXIST AND WE WERE
SENT OUT ON A HUGE **WILD-
GOOSE CHASE**.



AND IF JACK'S
STILL ON THE FARM
WHEN WE GET BACK,
I STOMP HIM LIKE
A **GRAPE**.

STILL, IT TROUBLES ME
THAT JACK MADE UP SUCH
A BIZARRE LIE. WHAT DID HE
HOPE TO **GAIN** BY IT?



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE **DOOR**, BUFKIN?

THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT, DUMMY.



MAYBE IF WE CAN FIND OUT, AND GET IT **BACK**, ALL OF THOSE FABLES WHO'VE DESERTED ME FOR SO MANY DAYS AND DAYS AND DAYS WILL BE ABLE TO COME BACK TO WORK AGAIN.

HMMM. SURE IS A PUZZLER, HUH?





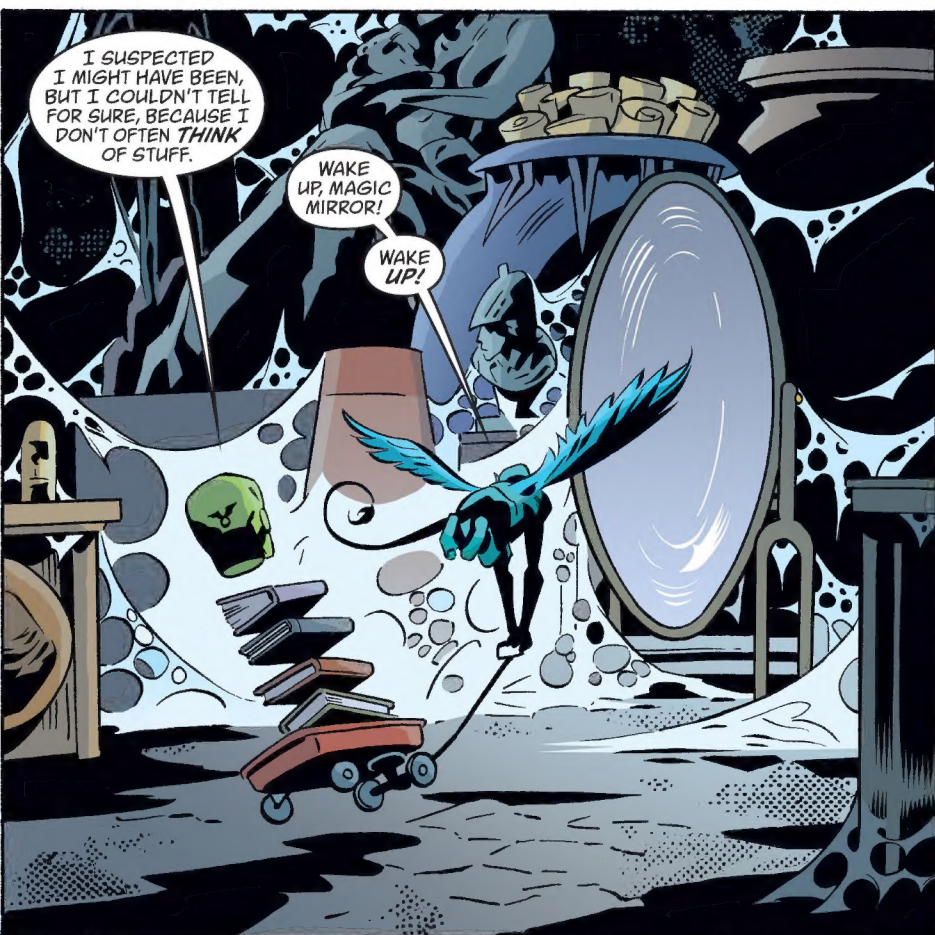
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I'D DO IF I WAS MISSING A DOOR?

I'D ASK THE MAGIC MIRROR. HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO KNOW THE MOST INTERESTING AND OBSCURE THINGS.



FRANKY, YOU'RE A GENIUS!

REALLY?



I SUSPECTED I MIGHT HAVE BEEN, BUT I COULDN'T TELL FOR SURE, BECAUSE I DON'T OFTEN THINK OF STUFF.

WAKE UP, MAGIC MIRROR!

WAKE UP!



YOU HAVE TO RHYME.

OH, YEAH.

FORGOT.



MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE FLOOR!

HELP ME FIND THE MISSING DOOR!

NNNG--
HNNN--UH--
:SNORT:
--UHM...



OH, GOOD MORNING, GENTLE FABLES.

WHAT WAS THAT YOU--?
OH, YES. THE DOOR. RIGHT. UHM, HERE GOES...

THE DOOR IS GONE.

IT'S DIED AWAY.

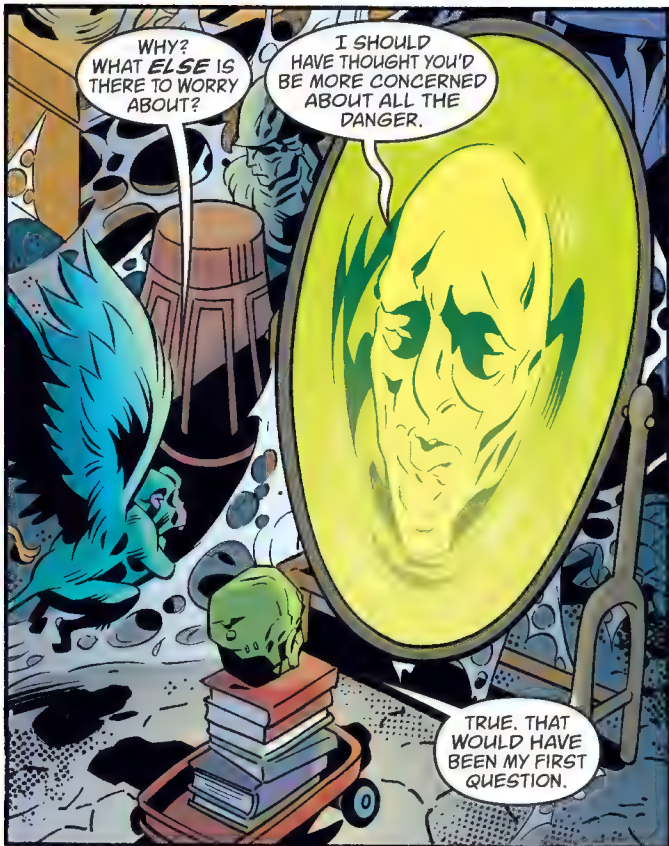
ONLY A NEW SPELL CAN BRING IT BACK SOMEDAY.



CAN I BE OF ANY FURTHER ASSISTANCE?

THAT'S IT?

THAT'S ALL YOU'VE GOT?

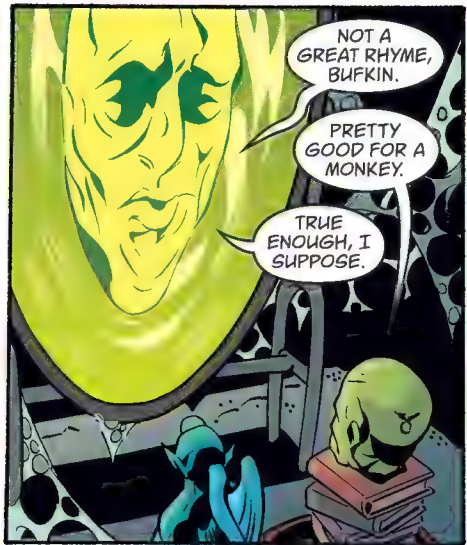




OKAY, FINE. HERE GOES.

MIRROR, MIRROR (WHO KNOWS WHAT YOU'RE MADE OF?)

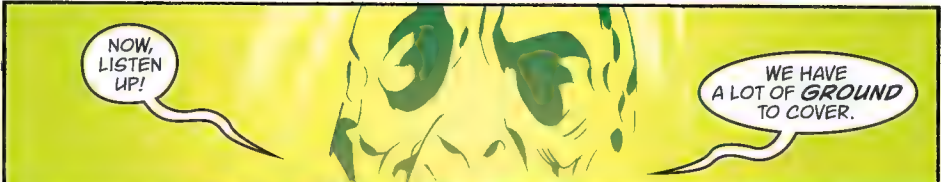
TELL ME NOW WHAT I SHOULD BE MOST AFRAID OF.



NOT A GREAT RHYME, BUFKIN.

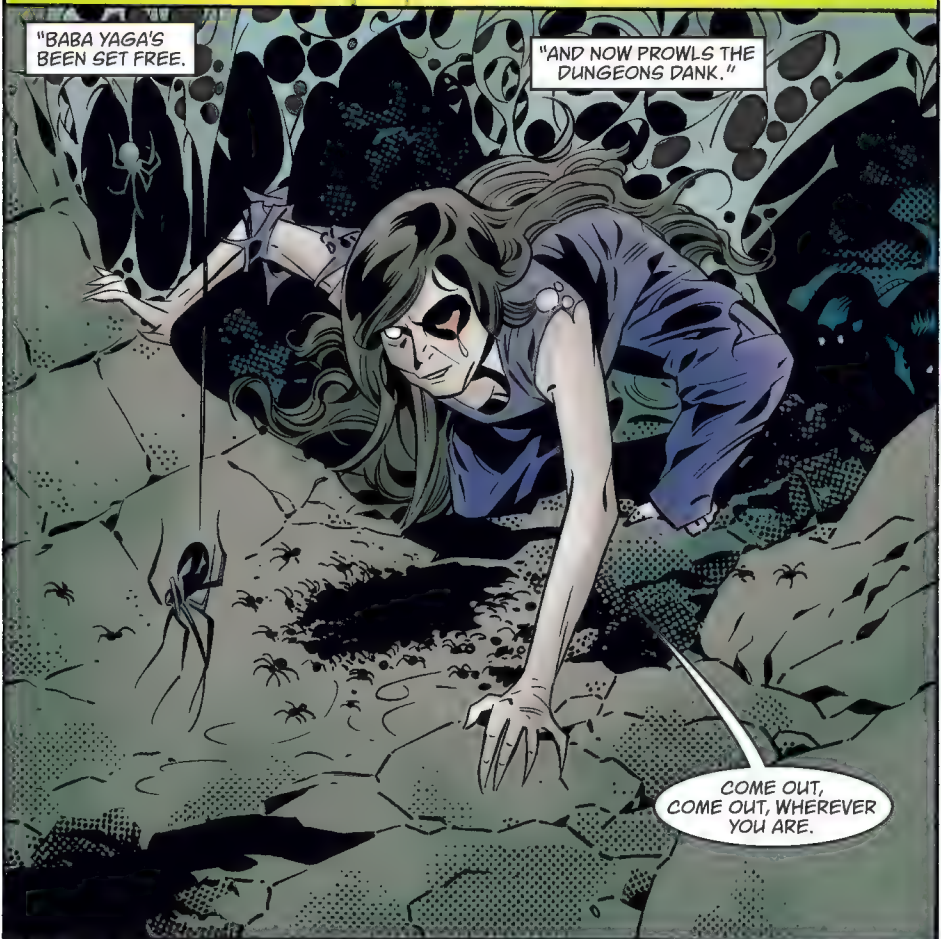
PRETTY GOOD FOR A MONKEY.

TRUE ENOUGH, I SUPPOSE.



NOW, LISTEN UP!

WE HAVE A LOT OF **GROUND** TO COVER.



"BABA YAGA'S BEEN SET FREE.

"AND NOW PROWLs THE DUNGEONS DANK."

COME OUT, COME OUT, WHEREVER YOU ARE.



"SHE CONTEMPLATES
WITH EVIL GLEE,
"EVERY SOUL SHE'LL
PERSONALLY THANK."

COME OUT
AND SEE WHAT
I CAN DO, NOW
THAT MY POWER'S
NOT DRAINED OUT
OF ME EVERY
MORNING.

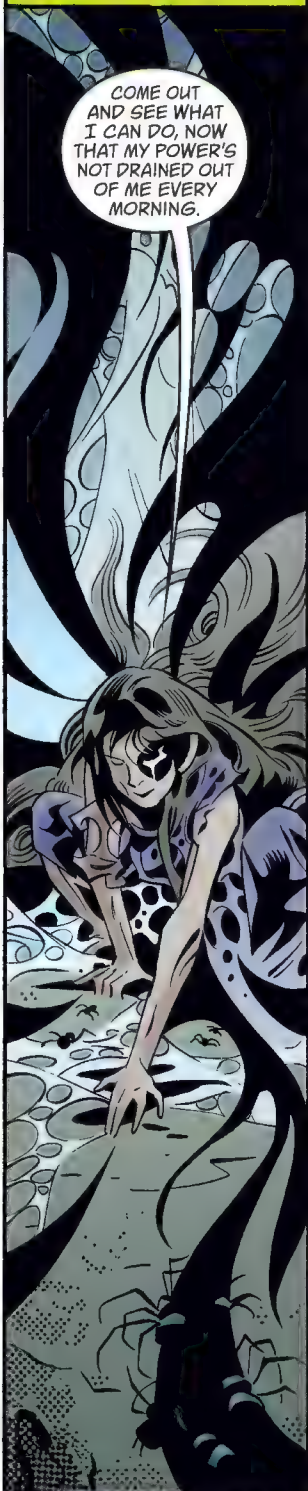
"FOR KEEPING HER
IMPRISONED OH SO
LONG,

"DRAINED OF ALL
HER POWER."

SEE HOW IT
RETURNS TO ME,
GROWING DAY BY
DAY, HOUR BY
HOUR?

"TO THOSE WHO
WRONGED HER
SHE'LL IN TURN
DO WRONG,
"HER RAGE GROWS
BY THE HOUR."

COME OUT,
LITTLE CHILDREN,
LITTLE TIDBITS, LITTLE
MORSELS FOR MY
STEWPOOT.



TODAY.

IT'S REALLY COMING DOWN!



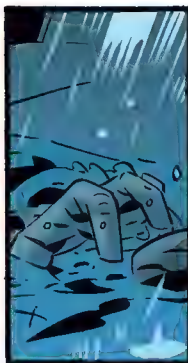
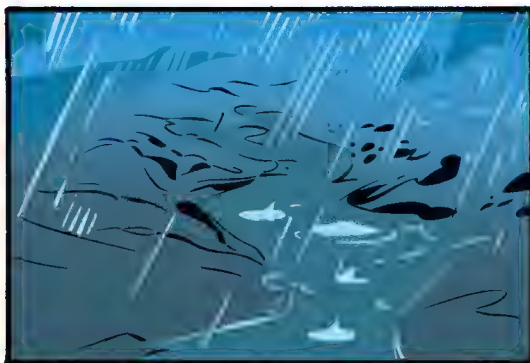
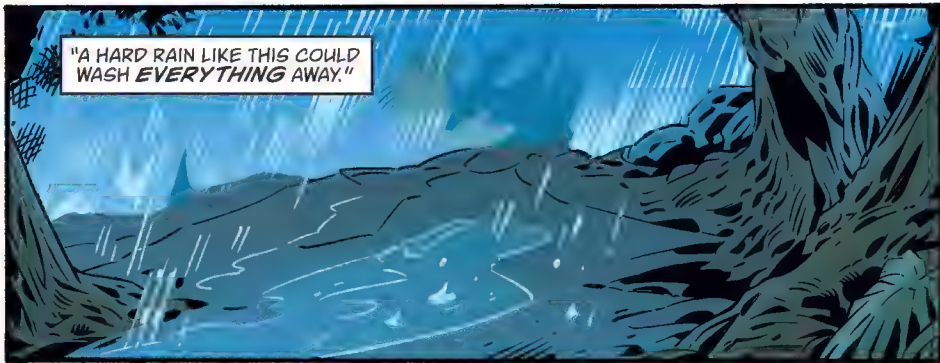
RAINING CATS AND DOGS!

OH, HOW I WISH THAT WERE TRUE! DOES THAT REALLY EVER HAPPEN?

I DOUBT IT. BUT THIS IS SHAPING UP TO BE A REAL GULLY-WHUMPER. MY COZY SET'S GOING TO BE FLOODED FOR SURE.



"A HARD RAIN LIKE THIS COULD WASH EVERYTHING AWAY."



MANY DAYS AGO...

A
WICKED
WITCH.



A
POWERFUL
GENII.



ASSORTED
LESSLER GENIES,
EFRITS AND BOTTLE
DEMONS.



AND ABOUT
A THOUSAND OTHER
GHOSTS, IMPS, SPRITES,
EVIL FAIRIES, ELEMENTALS,
INCUBI, CHANGELINGS,
NIXIES, PHANTOM
WARRIORS, SHADES,
SPECTERS, SPOOKS
AND REVENANTS.



AND THEY'VE
ALL BEEN RELEASED
SOMEWHERE
IN THE BUSINESS
OFFICE?



YEPPERS. AS I
SAID, IT WAS A **MASSIVE**
AND POWERFUL UNBINDING
THAT TOOK PLACE. I WAS
ALMOST KNOCKED FREE
MYSELF--PUSHED RIGHT
OUT OF THE
MIRROR.



FUNNY, HUH? IN MY FIRST
THREE THOUSAND YEARS
OF CAPTIVITY I TRIED
EVERYTHING I COULD TO
BREAK FREE. BUT AT THAT
POINT, I HELD ON WITH ALL
MY STRENGTH TO **STAY**
IN THE MIRROR.



SOMEWHERE ALONG
THE WAY I'VE COME TO
THINK OF THIS AS MY
NATURAL HOME.

WHO
WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT?



MY,
OH MY!

I'M
SUCH A
DOOMED
MONKEY!



THE NORTH WIND'S
CASTLE KEEP.

TODAY.

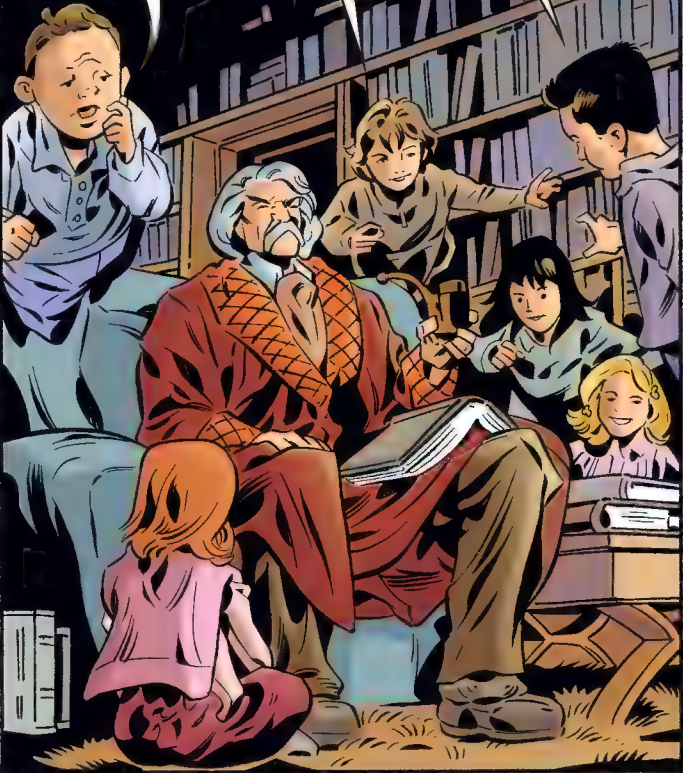
IT
WAS SO COOL,
GRANDDAD!
WE LEARNED
TO SMOKE AND PLAY
POKER!



AND HOW
TO TALK TO GIRLS
WHO AREN'T YOUR
SISTER--THOUGH I
DIDN'T UNDERSTAND
THAT TOO WELL.

AND WE
GOT TO DRINK
GROWNUP
DRINKS.

HARD
LIKKER!



NOT A WHOLE
BUNCH.

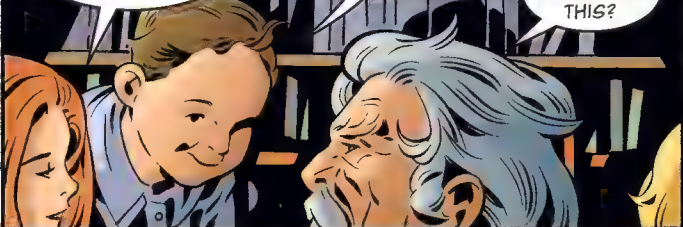
JUST A SIP
OR TWO, AND ONLY
ONE OF US AT A
TIME.



WE ALL MIXED HIM
DRINKS AND WHOEVER
MADE THE BEST ONE GOT
TO TRY A TASTE OF IT
WHEN WE BROUGHT
IT TO HIM.

BUT HE DRANK
ALL THE LOSER DRINKS
TOO. HE REALLY DRINKS
A WHOLE BUNCH.

MY SON
TAUGHT YOU
THIS?

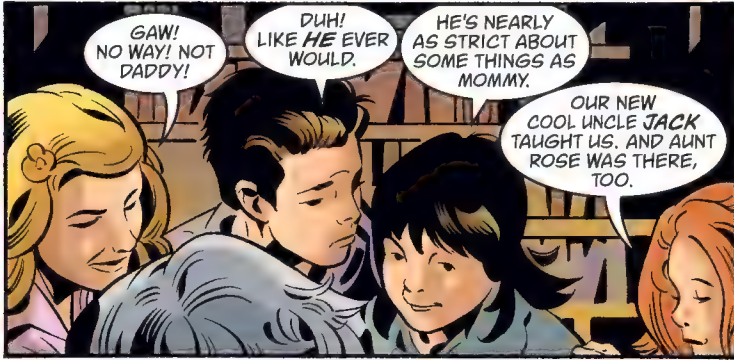


GAW!
NO WAY! NOT
DADDY!

DUH!
LIKE HE EVER
WOULD.

HE'S NEARLY
AS STRICT ABOUT
SOME THINGS AS
MOMMY.

OUR NEW
COOL UNCLE JACK
TAUGHT US, AND AUNT
ROSE WAS THERE,
TOO.



BUT SHE
WASN'T FEELING
WELL.



MANY DAYS AGO...

OH, SUCH DELIGHTFUL THINGS I WILL DO WHEN I FIND YOU.

BLACK FOREST WITCH.

AND HER LAPDOG--DON'T THINK I'VE FORGOTTEN YOU, BIGBY.

AND THE LITTLE BLONDE ONE WHO FANCIES HERSELF SUCH A SLY SPY.

ALONG WITH EVERYONE ELSE. WHY BE PICKY WHEN I'M SO HUNGRY?

NOW WHERE ARE YOU LEADING ME?

TUG-TUG-TUGGING LITTLE STRINGS OF MY DESIRE.

LOOK!

WONDER OF WONDERS!

YOU THIEVES HAD MY TREASURES ALL ALONG. ALL THESE LOST AGES, WHILE I SEARCHED COUNTLESS **WORLDS** FOR THEM.

MY PESTLE AND MORTAR AND BIRCHWOOD BROOM.

"NOW THAT MAKES ME
WONDER IF YOU ALSO
HAVE MY DEAR COTTAGE."



WOLF VALLEY.

TODAY.

WELCOME HOME, SNOW AND BIGBY!

I'M SORRY THE MISSION TURNED OUT TO BE A WILD GOOSE CHASE. JACK IS SUCH A SCAMP.

IT'S OKAY, YOUR HONOR. AT LEAST IT GOT ME OUT OF THE AREA, AND THAT, AFTER ALL, WAS THE MAIN REASON TO *BOTHER* WITH HIS CRAZY STORY.

AH YES, ABOUT THAT.

ANY RENEWED ANGER?

NOT YET, BUT I CAN ALREADY FEEL THE DARK GUY TUGGING AT ME AROUND THE EDGES.

ME, TOO. IT'S LIKE A CONSTANT THING, THOUGH, SO I'M GETTING USED TO IT.

I JUST HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL TO KEEP MYSELF CONSTANTLY UNDER TIGHT CONTROL.

YOU KNOW, JACK ACTUALLY SAID IT WAS *YOUR* IDEA FOR HIM TO COME UP HERE TO THE FARM, THAT YOU ASSIGNED HIM A SPECIFIC MISSION, BIGBY. CAN YOU *BELIEVE* HIS AUDACITY?

MAYBE WE SHOULD GET STARTED?



GOOD IDEA. I'M AFRAID BEAUTY WON'T BE JOINING US THIS EVENING. SHE DIDN'T FEEL WELL.

I HOPE IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS.

I DOUBT IT. I SUSPECT IT'S JUST A CASE OF THE GRUMPYS.



OKAY, SNOW AND I NEED TO PLAY CATCH-UP. WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE DARK MAN?

WHO KNOWS?

NO ONE'S CHECKED IN ALL THIS TIME?



WE'VE HAD A STRICT HANDS-OFF POLICY UNTIL WE WERE MORE CERTAIN WE'RE STILL SAFE HERE.

THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR CROWD HAS BEEN STRENGTHENING OUR SPELL FORTIFICATIONS.



WE HAVE BEEN INDEED.

WE'RE PRETTY SURE HE'S STILL IN FABLETOWN.



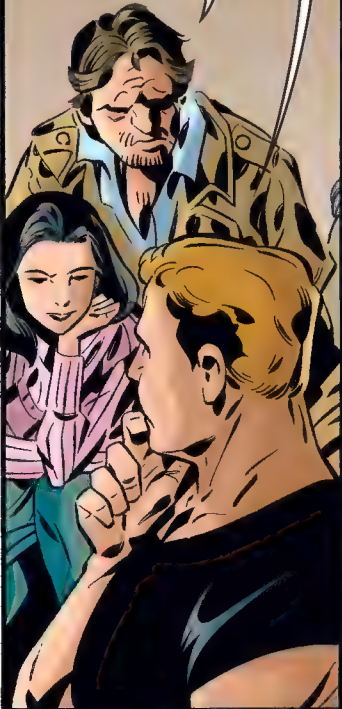
THAT ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH. OUR SPELLS IN FABLETOWN WERE STRONG AND HE JUST BLEW RIGHT THROUGH THEM. WE WON'T BEAT THIS GUY BY BUILDING A BETTER FORT TO HIDE BEHIND.

SOONER OR LATER WE'LL NEED TO COME OUT FROM HIDING AND TAKE THE FIGHT TO HIM.

AND THAT STARTS WITH GATHERING SPECIFIC INTELLIGENCE.

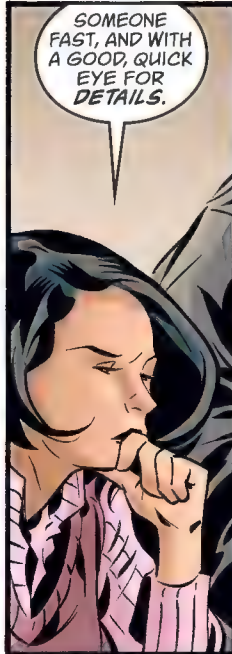
FINE. I AGREE. BUT HOW?

SINCE WE DON'T WANT TO APPROACH FABLETOWN TOO CLOSELY, LET'S DO A HIGH ALTITUDE **OVERFLIGHT**--JUST TO GET A GENERAL LOOK AT THE CURRENT CONDITIONS THERE.



GOOD IDEA. I CAN HAVE A CHAT WITH COMMANDER ARROW OF THE AIR PATROL. SEE IF HE CAN RECOMMEND A GOOD BIRD FOR THE MISSION.

SOMEONE FAST, AND WITH A GOOD, QUICK EYE FOR DETAILS.



MY GROUP CAN HELP THERE. WE DEVELOPED GOOD SPELLS FOR SEEING THROUGH ANOTHER'S EYES DURING THAT BUSINESS SPYING ON AMBASSADOR HANSEL.

LOVELY! NOW WE'RE GETTING SOMEWHERE. GOOD FOR YOU, FRAU TOTENKINDER.



AND IS IT JUST ME, OR ARE YOU LOOKING YOUNGER EVERY DAY?

FLATTERER.

GATHER YOUR INTELLIGENCE, SNOW, GENTLEMEN. AND DO CONSULT US WHERE WE CAN BE OF HELP.



BUT PLEASE DEAL WITH OZMA OR ONE OF THE OTHERS OVER THE FOLLOWING DAYS. I'LL BE GOING INTO STRICT **SECLUSION** AFTER TONIGHT.

IT'S TIME TO PREPARE MYSELF FOR BATTLE.



THE BUSINESS OFFICE.

MANY DAYS AGO...

TRUE, FRANKY OL' PAL. BUT WHERE COULD WE GO? WE'RE TRAPPED IN THERE WITH ALL OF THESE GHOULIES, MONSTERS AND MEANIES.

EVENTUALLY, NO MATTER *HOW* WELL WE HIDE, ONE OF THEM WOULD FIND US.

SO YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF *WWBD*, RIGHT?

WWBD?

WHAT WOULD BIGBY DO?

OH, I GET IT, OR YOU COULD GO WITH *WWBBD*. WHAT WOULD BOY BLUE DO?

EVEN BETTER!

WITH NO OTHER ALTERNATIVES, YOU AND I NEED TO TAKE UP ARMS AND DO BATTLE WITH *ALL* OF THESE MONSTERS.

ME?

UNTIL THE BUSINESS OFFICE IS OURS AGAIN.

WHAT COULD I DO? TRY TO *CHEW* THEM TO DEATH?

DON'T WORRY, PAL. I CAN WORRY ENOUGH FOR *BOTH* OF US. AND WHO KNOWS?

"MAYBE IT
WON'T BE
THAT BAD."

NOW I'M
COMING FOR
YOU!



NEXT: FIGHT OR FLIGHT!

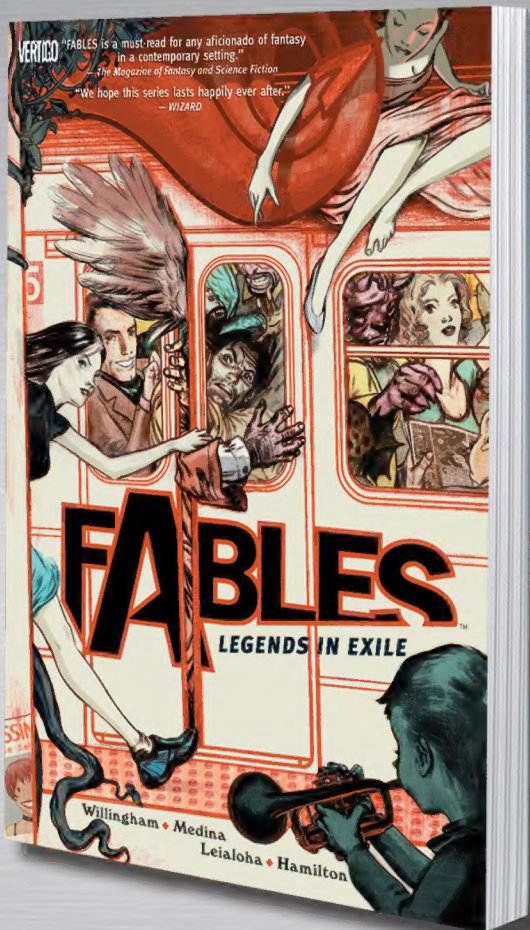
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

BILL WILLINGHAM

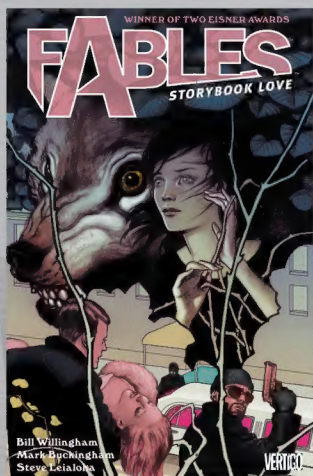
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



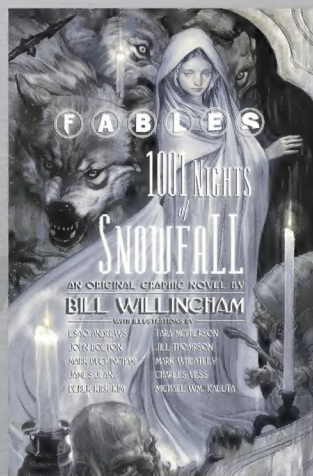
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STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:
HOMELANDS



FABLES:
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NATHAN